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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1546
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RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR KRAMER'S FAREWELL TOUR: DOMINICA

REF: A. BRIDGETOWN 1640

[¶](#)B. BRIDGETOWN 60

Classified By: Ambassador Mary Kramer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[¶](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On October 18, Ambassador Kramer paid farewell courtesy calls on the President, Acting Prime Minister and Acting Foreign Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica. With both the President and the Acting Prime Minister, the Ambassador discussed goals for economic development in Dominica. With the Acting Prime Minister, she also raised the Venezuela and Guatemala race for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and USG training programs refused by Dominican officials. Ambassador Kramer and the Acting Foreign Minister primarily focused on the Caribbean's need for assistance in developing its security capabilities and briefly discussed Dominica's economic citizenship program. After her meetings, Ambassador Kramer held a farewell press conference. END SUMMARY.

PRESIDENT LIVERPOOL: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

[¶](#)2. (C) Ambassador Kramer met with Nicholas J. O. Liverpool, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, on October 18 for a cordial and substantive meeting focusing on potential economic development. The President explained that Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit wants a high school graduate in every home and that the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica (GOCD) needs to assist in finding jobs for these graduates. According to the President, Dominica loses its graduates to the United States where they can make and, more importantly, save more money than they can in Dominica. He explained that workers in Dominica can sustain a daily living, but do not make enough to save significantly and therefore lose out on the security that savings bring in the face of medical or other unpredictable emergencies.

[¶](#)3. (C) President Liverpool also emphasized the need to develop an agricultural processing industry and regional shipping capability. As an example, he mentioned that Dominica has a surplus of grapefruits but needs a canning or juicing facility to further market this excess. He also stated that Dominica needs a way to ship fruit, fresh or processed, within the region. According to President Liverpool, although Dominica would be unable to compete in the U.S. market, a demand for Dominican agricultural products

exists in the northern Caribbean islands, such as the U.S. and British Virgin Islands. He further stated that such development is more important than the stadium currently being constructed because an advanced agricultural sector would get more money to the growers.

ACTING PM GEORGE: ECONOMICS, TRAINING, AND VENEZUELA

¶4. (C) Acting Prime Minister Ambrose George also focused on economic development and goals. He mentioned the praises from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for Dominican reform, stating that Dominica is now seen as a model for restructuring and that the IMF predicts 4 percent economic growth in Dominica for 2006. APM George stated that Dominica's relationship with the IMF has been so beneficial that the GOCD may request IMF assistance past the current December deadline in order to keep the country's fiscal policy disciplined.

¶5. (C) Like President Liverpool, the Acting Prime Minister stressed Dominica's need to focus on human resource development, particularly education, scholarships and employment, citing the Youth Business Trust Program designed to subsidize start-up businesses as one step by the GOCD. He also emphasized the need for infrastructure improvements in the agricultural sector, particularly in processing and shipping, adding that the European Union is currently funding infrastructure upgrades. Finally, APM George also updated Ambassador Kramer on Dominica's Petrocaribe shipments, explained that the process of establishing a delivery system for Venezuelan oil products is slow but streaming along, and that the first shipment should still arrive mid-November (septel).

¶6. (C) The Ambassador raised two specific issues with the APM George. The first was Dominican officials recently selected for U.S. training programs, including an International Visitors Leadership Program, who chose at the last minute not to attend with little warning to the U.S. Embassy (ref A). As expected, the Acting Prime Minister did not have a response, but said he would pass the Ambassador's concern to PM Skerrit. Ambassador Kramer also mentioned the Venezuela-Guatemala race for a UNSC seat, sharing Belize's October 17 decision not to oppose Guatemala and Venezuela's agreement with Ecuador to support the South American position against EU preferences on bananas. To this, APM George agreed to pass the developments on to PM Skerrit and also shared his personal feelings that the UN is too important a forum for Chavez to be acting the disrespectful way he did in his appearance before the most recent UNGA.

¶7. (C) BIONOTE: Acting PM George studied at Washington State University in the early 1980s and still has cousins in Seattle. He reminisced about what a great experience school was, even sharing stories of spinning out in the snow. After returning to Dominica in 1985, George worked in the Ministry of Agriculture as the head of coconut development and then as director of the banana industry. Later he worked in the private sector before getting involved with politics. As a politician, he has served as Minister of Finance and Minister of Agriculture, and currently serves as Minister of Public Works and Utilities.

ACTING FM BLACKMOORE: REGIONAL SECURITY

¶8. (C) Acting Foreign Minister Rayburn Blackmoore normally serves as the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office and, in that capacity, focuses on security issues and the assistance Dominica needs to accomplish security goals. Blackmoore opened speaking very positively on the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS), saying that the GOCD's preparations are moving along as it develops watchlists to share with the region. He agreed that information sharing is key for APIS to work, particularly with the planned

introduction of the Caribbean common visa for Cricket World Cup (CWC). He also stated that the cruise ships must participate with APIS and, to make this happen, Dominica will legislate APIS participation for all air and sea vessels coming into a Dominican port. However, Blackmoore emphasized the region still needs the appropriate infrastructure to read travel documents electronically and share the information.

¶19. (C) Concerning CWC, Blackmoore stated that Dominica needs USD 1 million for petrol, food for the police, and about 30 more police troops on-ready because most CWC attendees are not interested in cricket but rather are seeking opportunities to commit crimes. He also suggested that the greatest security concern is tourists living on ships for months as this makes them a large and soft target.

¶10. (C) Blackmoore spent much of the meeting discussing the need for U.S.-Caribbean assistance in fighting intraregional crime, stating that all CARICOM ministers are concerned over what they perceive as the U.S. lack of interest. He shared a number of reasons why he agrees the region needs to take ownership of the problems, including the possibility that if even 10 percent of transiting drug money stays in a country, that can cause a lot of corruption in a country the size of Dominica, and that most drugs through CARICOM countries are on their way to Europe, not the United States. However, Blackmoore still asserted that CARICOM countries need assistance with vessels to replace the current inadequate boats of the Regional Security System. Blackmoore also mentioned that the GOCD wants to upgrade its immigration system to track both entry and exit for each visitor, as well as how long each visitor stays. He stated that this will help fight human trafficking, as well as those who come to Dominica freely but then leave illegally (ref B), but that the system will cost USD 1.8 million.

¶11. (C) Blackmoore also raised two U.S.-Dominica projects through which he believes the United States still owes Dominica some form of funding or assistance. The first was a project with the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) from 2001 and second was collaboration with the Military Liaison Office (MLO) in 2005. PolOff is currently following up on the possible promised funding with the GOCD, NAS, and MLO.

¶12. (C) When asked about the GOCD's economic citizenship program, Blackmoore explained that the government is always reviewing the program to make it tighter and increase due diligence so as to not compromise the integrity or name of Dominica. He also stated that the GOCD is raising the fees for economic citizenship. According to Blackmoore, there are economic benefits to economic citizenship that Dominica needs to exploit, but that the government wants to stay within international standards. (Note: This answer appears to be the current official party line on economic citizenship. Sean Douglas, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, told PolOff the same thing in a phone conversation less than a week earlier. End Note.)

PRESS EVENT

¶13. (U) Ambassador Kramer made her public farewell to Dominica in a well-attended press conference, reiterating the U.S. position on Internet gaming, our grave concern over Venezuela's potential UNSC candidacy, and the reason for and realistic consequences of the WHTI initiative. The Ambassador also signed an Ambassador's Fund for HIV/AIDS grant. Acting PM George also attended the press conference. In a press release, Dominica's Government Information Service used the Ambassador's congratulations for Dominica's successful cooperation with the IMF to address its public debt and other fiscal issues. The press release also cited Ambassador Kramer's reminder that, during her tenure, the USG has disbursed over USD 200 million in grants to the region.
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